

TYLER AND THE MAN: Conservation In and Out of the Classroom

By Harriet Howe



Often children are asked who they admire, and the predictable answers are the current superstars of professional sports. But sometimes the answer is surprising.

For first-time hunter Tyler B. from Hettinger, North Dakota, it wouldn't require much thought. Immediately he'd say his new friend from Missouri, pheasant hunter Pat McDaniel. McDaniel has been coming to the Matt Korang farm northeast of Regent for 24 years with hunting partners. But when Matt married Tyler's mom three years ago a new bond was formed between young and experienced hunter.

As part of a Hettinger Middle School life science classroom project on conservation of natural resources in North Dakota, Tyler was assigned to interview an upland game hunter with a selected list of questions. Tyler chose to interview his friend Pat. The following are excerpts from the interview that *North Dakota OUTDOORS* readers might find insightful:

Tyler: How long have you been hunting and what are your earliest memories?

Pat: I have been hunting since I was seven and served as the "brush beater" to flush rabbits from the thickets.

Tyler: What was the first gun you owned?

Pat: I received my first gun when I was 11 for Christmas, it was a single-shot Harrington and Richardson 12 gauge shotgun.

Tyler: What animals have you hunted and what is your favorite?

Pat: Quail, rabbits, squirrels, waterfowl and white-tailed deer. My favorite hunting experience was my first trip to North Dakota for pheasant on the Korang farm. The pheasant is a beautiful bird and the challenge they pose in finding them and the skill required to bag them make the trips memorable.

Tyler: What's your definition of a slob hunter?

Pat: My definition of a slob hunter is one who kills game and then fails to claim the animals, one who trespasses, and one who thinks the game laws are for everyone but him. As a police officer I have observed many times deer shot and dying in rural areas of Missouri. They have been shot from the road and the shooters have driven away with no thought of retrieving the animal, only savoring the cowardly thrill of shooting from a car and speeding away.

Tyler: What do you think of the Conservation Reserve Program?

Pat: The termination of these programs would certainly result in reduced populations of game birds, since they provide tremendous cover for the birds. I have seen a vast improvement in the bird populations over the last 24 years. This increase I think can be directly attributed to this program.

Tyler: My teacher says hunting creates active conservationists. Hunting will encourage year-round activities to be developed that are spin-offs from hunting.

Pat: In Missouri there are numerous youth-oriented hunting programs and hunter safety clinics. I think these are wonderful programs and are already producing safer, more conservation-minded hunters. Sport hunting does create a lot of spin-offs like joining clubs like Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, skeet and trap shooting to name a few.

Tyler: What would you do in this case? You raise your gun to shoot a rooster and you discover you have shot a hen pheasant that was flying directly parallel to it.

Pat: I have never had such an occurrence, but since I have never written myself a ticket when I was speeding (I slowed down and corrected my behavior) I would leave it in the field for the natural predators, not transport it anywhere, and I would rethink my shot so it doesn't happen again.

Tyler: Mrs. Howe says that you should never profit from a mistake like that and not to take it with you or field dress it and take it home.

Pat: I agree.

Tyler: What is your favorite pheasant recipe?

Pat: I love pheasant cooked in a cream sauce.

Tyler: The potential kill is a necessary aspect of hunting. What meaningful satisfaction do you get with each hunt?

Pat: I have hunted for 44 years now and have more enjoyment being out in nature than ever before, with little concern about "what I get." I find I derive more pleasure vicariously mentoring young hunters; hopefully passing on tips to them about safe hunting and sportsmanlike conduct.

Tyler: I know because you tell me all that stuff like how to carry a gun, not to run with my gun, and not to shoot uphill.

Pat: As you get older my advice would be to get heavily involved in conservation programs, respect land ownership usage, always demand safe handling of firearms and serve as an example of ethics to your fellow hunters.

HARRIET HOWE is an enthusiastic and dedicated science teacher at Hettinger Middle School. She has been an active participant and supporter of the Department's Project WILD program for years. Her interest in science and conservation has resulted in imaginative assignments that take her students beyond the classroom to study the biology and sociology of the world around them.